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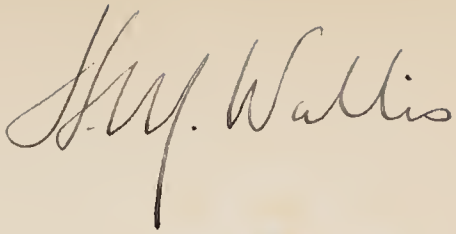

THE BAY COLONY

AN ADDRESS
DELIVERED AT BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS
JULY 15, 1930
ON THE OCCASION OF
THE GREAT MEETING HELD TO CELEBRATE
THE THREE HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE FOUNDING OF THE CITY

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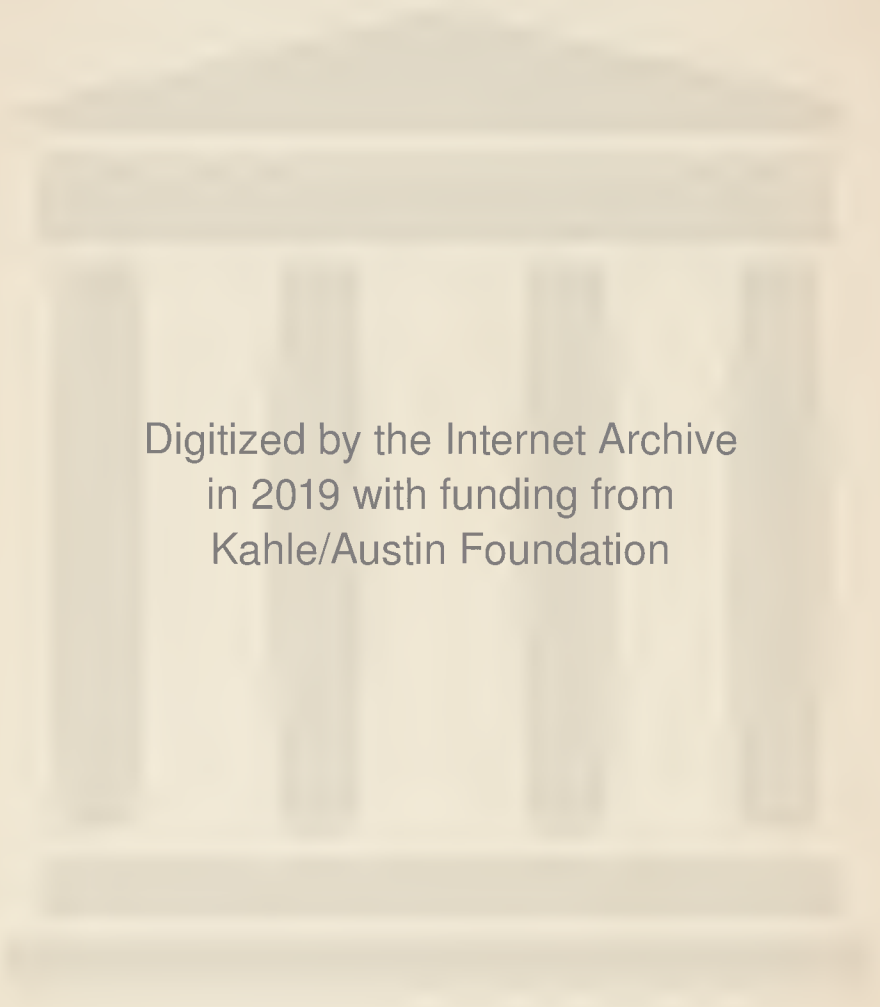

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THE BAY COLONY

A Tercentenary Address

BY

HERBERT A. L. FISHER

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
The Riverside Press Cambridge
1930

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The Riverside Press
CAMBRIDGE · MASSACHUSETTS
PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

FOREWORD

This book contains the oration delivered by the Right Honorable Herbert Albert Laurens Fisher, F.R.S., on Boston Common July 15, 1930, at the State Exercises Commemorative of the Three Hundredth Anniversary of the founding of the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

One of the eminent authorities in education and history among contemporary Englishmen, and now the Warden of New College, Oxford, Mr. Fisher was invited to deliver this address by the Massachusetts Bay Colony Tercentenary Commission because of extraordinary fitness, and he is here as an honored guest of the Commonwealth.

These striking pages merit wide reading, not only by dwellers in New England, but by the Nation. Our orator has shown himself no mere idolater of the Puritan forefathers. Yet, while he proves with sagacious and lively skill that despite congregational-

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ism, town government, and the village school, their early management of their affairs was foreign to modern conceptions of freedom, he indicates with eloquent sympathy that our present national greatness is largely due to the stern but fervent virtues which guided them — their labor, their courage, and their faith. He continues to find in their descendants the moral traces of this origin — 'an energy and simplicity of character, a sense of duty, an acknowledgment of the mysterious and compelling power of the spirit in man.'

HERBERT PARKER
Chairman of the
Massachusetts Bay Colony
Tercentenary Commission

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

We are all proud to be here to-day, and to join in the commemoration of this Tercentenary. More particularly am I conscious of the high privilege which has been conferred upon me by your invitation that I should take an active part in these historic ceremonies, for you remind me that the foundation of Massachusetts was an English act, that the Colony of Massachusetts was a product of English character, and that whatever there was of good and evil in the history of the State of Massachusetts for the space of two hundred years was chiefly the result of the interplay of English temperament and American surroundings. Your gracious invitation encourages me to recall these things, so gratifying to my English pride. Indeed, I think that you would not have asked me to follow John Winthrop across the Atlantic,

had you not felt that the many dividing memories of the Past are but as dust in comparison with those deeper things which give to men and women of the same stock, sundered as they may be by the accidents of time and circumstances, a common outlook on the world and a common sense of human values.

THE BAY COLONY

THE BAY COLONY

THE American Commonwealth owes its being, not to statecraft or organisation, not to deep political instinct, or clear-cut political dogma, but to the enterprise and courage of millions of self-sufficient men, who, caring little about politics or mere political allegiance, settled this continent, clearing its forests, tilling its land, harnessing its waterways, and raising up by their grim, intrepid energy the mightiest apparatus of mechanical power which the world has ever witnessed.

In the earliest and most critical century of what is known as the Colonial Period, two distinctive and enduring marks were set upon your civilisation. The first was racial. The early immigrants to these shores were Englishmen, not Welshmen, or Scots, or Irishmen, but Englishmen from England,

bringing with them that inheritance of thought and language, of character and politics, of legal custom and political tradition, which had been gathered in that land by centuries of fortunate history, and was shared by all the races, Iberian and Celtic, Saxon, Dane, and Norman, which were blended together in the English people.

The second characteristic was hardly less decisive. In this first formative period of your history the largest and most settled body of English colonists belonged to that middle strand of society, which in the old country had embraced the Puritan form of the Protestant religion.

In the English civil wars of the seventeenth century all the forces of the future were ranged on the Puritan side — the Royal Navy, the seafaring population, the City of London, the merchants and manufacturers of the East and North — so that it is not excessive to say that the modern industrial

democracy of Great Britain is the fruit of the Puritan Faith. Harsh and narrow, spurning the enchantments of mediæval piety, leaving without a murmur of regret exquisite Gothic cathedrals and grey old parish churches, and preferring to worship in mean, unlovely chapels, where no allurement of the senses might distract the solitary soul from its communing with God, the Puritans of England threw into the ordinary business of life a stark, ascetic energy which gave them leadership in every form of industrial and commercial enterprise. Labour they regarded as a Sacrament, pleasure as a Sin, the making of wealth as a sign that their service was acceptable unto the Lord. Every clothing town in the North was a Geneva, set in a land of easy-going Catholic landlords and peasants. For politics they had little gift, and, until 1828, little opportunity, but the field of Industry they made their own, and the smoking chimneys and clanging ma-

chinery of modern England are for the greater part the result of their labour.

On this side of the Atlantic the Puritan Movement produced results of equal moment. The men who followed John Winthrop to these shores three hundred years ago were not the first Englishmen or the first Puritans to set foot upon American soil; but they were the first wave of a great tidal flood of immigration, which, continuing for a decade, established a solid block of English Puritans in natural surroundings calculated to uproot everything that was weak, and to strengthen everything that was fierce, strong, and tenacious in their character. So the foundation of the Massachusetts Bay Colony is justly celebrated to-day as a cardinal date in the history of your Commonwealth. The Puritans of Massachusetts made New England; The Puritans of New England, streaming over the Allegheny Mountains into the central plains, and there multiplying their

numbers and bending their obstinate energies to farm, factory, counting-house, and railroad, carried out upon a larger and grander stage for America the task which the Puritans of the old country had accomplished in England. To the home-staying Puritans and their Nonconformist descendants belongs the credit of having converted a little agricultural island, off the continent of Europe, famous for its law and politics, its literature and music, into the pioneer state of modern Industrialism. Guided by a like destiny and schooled by a similar discipline, the Puritans of America so wrought that the country which they found a wilderness is now richer and more powerful than any society known to our experience.

Let it not, however, be imagined that Massachusetts, which was from the first the leading State in New England, and throughout the nineteenth century the most enlightened State in the Union, was governed by

principles which we here to-day can recognise as reasonable or just. A narrow religious franchise, persisting until it was abolished by a King of England in 1691, excluded four fifths of the inhabitants of the Colony from participation in the conduct of public affairs. Religious and racial toleration, practised in Rhode Island and the Middle States, was here replaced by a narrow and persecuting theocracy. The grand conceptions of civil and political liberty upon which the Constitution of the United States was ultimately to be based was foreign to the minds of your pious founders. They believed in none of the cardinal doctrines of a tolerant and democratic age. They spurned democracy, they persecuted conscience, and, seeing that the suffrage was confined to a minority of church members, they taxed without consent. Yet, wherever the influence of New England penetrated it carried with it three things, congregationalism, town

government, and the village school. On this triple foundation a great liberty-loving, self-improving, God-fearing, but fiercely competitive society was ultimately raised.

In another respect the Colony of Massachusetts has earned the applause of liberty-loving historians. It would seem that from the very first there reigned in this Colony a proud and determined spirit of independence. The Charter and Government of Massachusetts were transplanted from London to America. The coinage of the Colony bore no royal emblem. Even the settlers of the first generation, though they professed loyalty to the Crown, and even attachment to the Church of England, were prepared to resist certain royal commands by force of arms. Having crossed the Atlantic that they might worship God after their own fashion, and order their lives as it pleased themselves, they resented interference. They expected the mother country to help them in time of

need, but as Englishmen dwelling in America and claiming the traditional rights of Englishmen, they were resolved to manage their own affairs.

The latent seed of secession, to be detected so early in the history of the Colony, was fostered by the special character of its commercial relations with the mother country. Unlike Virginia, Massachusetts had no staple crop to send to England, and was compelled to finance her imports from the mother country through a profitable but illicit trade with the French West Indian Sugar Islands. The Virginian planter who shipped his tobacco to England was well aware of the value of the mother country as a market or distributing centre for the staple crop of his Colony. There was no such tie binding Massachusetts to her parent. That Colony experienced all the evils and none of the benefits of a commercial system which had been built up in England, not altogether without wis-

dom, and not altogether out of insular egotism, for the common benefit of the Empire. How could Massachusetts sell lumber in the Thames against the Norwegian, how trade with the French West Indies without breaking the British Navigation Laws, and what did it profit that in eighteen English counties the tobacco crop was trampled down by cavalry in the interests of colonial growers, since Massachusetts grew no tobacco, and had none to sell? So the inhabitants of this very Puritan and independent community thought their own thoughts and went their own ways, and in the crisis of the eighteenth century became the spearhead of the movement which fostered American independence, and led to the foundation of the United States.

The Founders of Massachusetts were not, the victims of grave economic injustice. We must not picture them as poor or helpless refugees. Some of them were well-to-do accord-

ing to the standards of those days, and held responsible positions as landowners, magistrates, merchants, and ministers of religion. Others were of the yeoman class, yet they left their native land with all that it had to offer them to face the perils of the Atlantic voyage, and the uncertainties of life in a New World.

The motives which inspired these men to take their tremendous resolution must always seem mysterious to a tolerant age. Had there been in England at that time terrible religious persecutions such as Bohemia experienced under Ferdinand, or France under Louis XIV, had Puritan Martyrs been condemned to the flames of Smithfield, or to the long-drawn agonies of the thumbscrew or the rack, we would better understand this solemn resolve. But, though there were cases of fine, of imprisonment, of deprivation, there was no material in the history of this time for an appendix to Foxe's 'Book of Martyrs.' Nor

do the issues which then divided the Puritan emigrants from their Arminian opponents appear to the modern eye to be of world-shattering importance. John Winthrop and his companions were not, like the Plymouth Fathers, independents in religion, but loyal members of the Church of England, who, while accepting Episcopacy, objected deeply to the ritualistic innovations which Bishops were seeking to impose on the National Church. The position of the Communion table, the use of vestments, the manner of observing the Sabbath — these questions, no deeper than those which now divide the two contending sections of the Church of England, seemed to the founders of this Colony to be matters of transcendant importance. The modern English country gentleman, confronted with the ritualistic practices which he dislikes, abstains from attendance at church. To the Puritan of the seventeenth century such an expedient was unthinkable.

To worship God in the manner in which God desired to be worshipped was to him the prime duty of man.

Let it be remembered also that the Protestant cause in England seemed to many to be encompassed at that time with alarming perils. Every one remembered the Guy Fawkes Plot to blow up the Houses of Parliament, and the odious plan, so fortunately frustrated, for marrying Prince Charles to a Spanish Princess. With the Catholic cause recovering ground in Germany, with Ireland solid, save for the young Scottish settlement in the North, for the Pope, with a French Princess wedded to the King of England, and tolerating Catholic practices at Court, is it wonderful that earnest Puritans should be uneasy? Passion ran very high. The House of Commons was more than once dissolved in tears. The King's favourite Buckingham was slain by the dagger of a fanatic, and many a young Englishman crossed the seas

to fight for God and the Bible in the German wars.

Among the politically minded, this tense religious feeling was reënforced by a sentiment akin to despair arising from King Charles's resolve to govern England without Parliament. A land in which Roman practices were enforced by the power of the State, in which an honest night of the shire, like Sir John Eliot, could be cast into prison for speaking the mind of any liberty-loving Englishman, was no home for these Puritan members of the Church of England who founded the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Their objection to the England in which they lived was not founded on any abstract doctrine of democracy. In the remarkable valedictory letter of April 7, 1630, which was written by John Winthrop and his associates on the Arbella, the pioneers can still describe themselves as 'His Majesty's loyal subjects.' They are loyal to the Crown, loyal to the

Church, 'their dear mother.' The advancement of social and political equality was far from their wishes or designs. 'The best part,' said Winthrop, 'is always the least, and of that best part the lesser part is always the better.' John Cotton, out of compliment to whose cure of souls in England the city of Boston derives its name, was equally emphatic. 'Democracy,' he writes, 'I do not conceive that God did ever ordain as a fit government either for Church or Commonwealth. If the people be governors, who shall be governed?' So far from the philosophy of Thomas Jefferson were the thoughts and ideals of your pious Founders.

How, then, are we to make plain to our understanding the strength of the original motives which led to the foundation of this Colony? Though religious and political grievances counted for something, and religious and political apprehensions for more, it was not primarily a revulsion against the

Crown, nor against the Church, nor against intolerant persecution, nor against harsh economic pressure. Rather it was a conviction that in the great opening up of the world through the wonderful geographical discoveries of that age, God had reserved a place for his elect where they could live without material cares or hindrance from malignant spirits, and worship the Lord according to his Holy Ordinances. Economic, patriotic, religious motives were blended in proportions varying with the character and circumstance of the individual. John Winthrop, a country squire from Groton in Suffolk, born in the Armada year, was suffering from financial as well as from religious anxieties, and had a son already settled in Barbadoes. The desire to own land, the belief that England was suffering from overpopulation, the spirit of adventure, were combined with the missionary impulse to raise a particular church in New England, to combat the influence of the

French Jesuits in Canada, and to convert the Indians to Christianity. 'Moreover, I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and I will plant them that they may dwell in a place of their own and move no more.' In this text (2 Sam. VII, 10), prefixed to his famous Boston Sermon, entitled 'God's Promise to his Plantation,' Cotton depicts the strongest motive which led to the Great Migration: 'To dwell in a place of their own and move no more.' To be under the English Crown, to be aided by the prayers of their Puritan brothers in England, but to be in a place of their own, where the soul was free. America was the new Canaan, the Land of Promise, to which under the Providence of God the chosen of the earth were directed to found in freedom and in peace a society dedicated to the true worship. Contemplating the depth of their convictions these solemn men felt no qualms as to the reality of their dedication. 'When God

wrappes us with his Ordinances and warms us with the life and power of them as with wings, there is a land of promise.' A Colony so conceived, at once select in its composition, and religious in its aim, was a tremendous fact. The ancient world could show no parallel. Nor was the experiment repeated. When the Colony of Jamaica was founded under the government of Cromwell, the religious motive, which twenty years before had burned so brightly, had faded away, giving place to the vulgar appetites which sway the lives of ordinary men.

In the whole range of American history there is no more important fact than the exodus of English Puritans to Massachusetts during the ten years which intervened between the voyage of John Winthrop and the summoning of the Short Parliament. But for that emigration everything in American history would have been different, the quality and texture of the population, the tone of

religious life, the governing ideas which moulded the American Constitution and have shaped the political course of the American people. The United States itself might never have come into being but for the angry spiritual convulsion which shook England to its foundations during those fateful ten years. That continuous stream of stern men flying from the wrath of an old Oxford prelate, and chafing under the suspension of Parliamentary government, made New England, and in making New England, more than half made the United States. From the human stock here accumulated in this short epoch at least one fourth of the population of your Republic is said to be derived. And what a fourth! In the life of a nation it is not tonnage which counts, but calibre. The contribution of New England to the civilisation of Northern America has been of a quality so strong and distinctive that it is still clearly to be discerned in the morals, the legislation,

and the social habits of the American people, a rib of granite defying the weather of three hundred years.

Over twenty thousand English Puritans came from the Old England to the New during this all-important decade, a small figure measured against the crowd which now gathers to the football stadium of Harvard or Yale, but in those days great enough, had it been drawn from one centre, to reduce the population of the second city of Great Britain to the dimensions of a village, and sufficiently numerous to give to Massachusetts and its neighbours the air, almost from the beginning, of a settled and civilised state.

What proportion of eminent Americans can trace their origin to the New England stock may be a matter of controversy: but the list is certainly a long one, and it is adorned by the great names of Abraham Lincoln and Benjamin Franklin. The lust of

travel and adventure, the impatience of troublesome people and obnoxious practices, the desire to live a new life of one's own in a new scene of one's own choosing, was not extinguished by a single disagreeable voyage across the Atlantic. The men who could turn their backs upon the sweet landscape of England, upon its swallows and nightingales, its singing brooks and emerald meadows, its primroses and bluebells, were capable of turning their backs on anything, even on Boston Common; and the greatness of Massachusetts, which we celebrate to-day, owes as much to the men it sent forth as to those it retained. 'Every land,' said Pericles, 'is the tomb of illustrious men.' In every State of the American Union are the tombs of men and women descended from these early New England professors of the Word of God. The mild security of a stationary life was not for the inheritors of such a spirit. Axe in hand, they wandered off into the wild hills and

forests, peopled an empty continent, and helped to subdue it to the arts of peace.

The Puritan Founders of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts represented one side only of English national life. The imagination, the fancy, the fun, the liberality and hospitality of soul which shine out in the poems and plays of Shakespeare were alien to their temperament and ways of thought. They believed the drama to be sinful, they were distrustful of music, the delight of art for art's sake was not for them. Religion was the primary concern of life. All else was vanity; but by religion they meant their own form of religion, not any other. Baptists and Quakers had as little place in their exclusive system as Romans and Episcopalians. Having crossed the Atlantic to escape the English Bishops, they proposed to spare themselves the risks of toleration and the annoyance of dissent.

Coming, as many of them did, from the

Universities and country houses in England, they set a value upon the knowledge which may be gathered from books, such as is not often to be found in the early stages of pioneer life. The need for making provision for a learned ministry was from the first present to their minds, and led, in 1636, to the earliest application of Public Funds to Public Education which was made in North America. Two years later, John Harvard of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, dying childless, bequeathed all his library of three hundred and twenty volumes and half his estate to that College, now a great University, which for three centuries has borne his honoured name and has stood in the forefront of American learning and education. Yet of academic liberty there was little or nothing. Theology dominated the arts and sciences, and the Harvard student was compelled to bend his youthful mind to the study of Hebrew, Chaldee, and Syriac,

and to find in the Greek hexameters of a Christian Bishop his principal model of poetic taste.

Apart from its religious character, the chief note of the Commonwealth during the Colonial Period was the homogeneous texture of its population. Though it ceased to receive immigrants from England after 1640, it did not, to any appreciable extent, receive them from other sources. The population grew by that wholesome law of natural increase which may be expected to operate when a vigorous stock is planted among the favours of Nature. The great tides of immigrants from Northern Ireland and from Germany, which swept into North America in the eighteenth century, hardly penetrated the spiritual barriers of this exclusive community. Massachusetts, the directing soul of all the New England Colonies, remained English through and through. As late as 1790 it was still almost wholly

composed of settlers of English descent.

Yet it was English with a difference. The colonists retained the fundamental characteristics of their former compatriots. They lacked their opportunities. For more than a century after the original settlement, Massachusetts remained estranged from the great liberating movements of the mind which were refreshing the intellectual life of England. While her young men were chained to the musty theology of Ames and Wollebius, their English contemporaries moved in a more liberal and generous air. For them was opened out that rich chapter in the history of scientific discovery which lies between the great figures of Bacon and Newton, when the creative work of Shakespeare and Milton in the field of poetry was matched by the scientific achievements of Harvey and Boyle, of Hooke, Wren, Newton, and Mayow. In comparison with such

opulence, the intellectual diet supplied to the youth of New England was meagre, indeed. How meagre may be measured by the rapture with which, in 1714, Samuel Johnson announces the acquisition by a College library, soon afterwards to be moved to Yale, of the works of Shakespeare and Milton, of Boyle, Locke, and Newton, writers long familiar to the English public, but only then made accessible to the students of what soon became the second most important centre of learning in New England.

There was another circumstance which gave to the life of this Commonwealth a peculiar and distinguishing character. 'The New Englanders,' wrote Cotton Mather, 'are a people of God settled in these which were once the Devil's territories.' The feeling that this little community of Christian men was on the fringe of a vast, unexplored continent inhabited by savage

tribes, the sentiment of horror which was caused by the ghastly consequences of an Indian foray, and the continuing sense of insecurity in the frontier districts, gave a character of fierceness to the people, and from time to time caused them to be swept by epidemics of superstitious terror. The spirit of rationalism and religious tolerance which established itself in England in 1688 was not fully dominant in Massachusetts until a century later.

The violent revulsion against ecclesiastical despotism which led to the first settlement in Massachusetts Bay had not broken the links which bound the settlers to their fellow Puritans in Europe. A decade of unparliamentary government in England drove thousands of angry refugees across the ocean, and, as each ship unloaded its burden, Massachusetts learned afresh of the pulling down of faithful ministers, of the advance of Catholic ceremonies and doctrines,

and of the oppressions to which the godly were exposed in their mother land. We may surmise that these stories lost nothing in the telling, and that in the minds of children the name of the mother country must have been associated with the notion of a harsh and malignant impiety.

Then came the great explosion of the English Civil War. With the victory of the Parliamentary Cause, the tide of immigration to Massachusetts was stemmed, and a stream of New England Puritans flowed back to the Old Country, some of them like Hugh Peters, Henry Vane, and George Downing, destined to play a prominent part in the drama of the English Civil War and Protectorate, and all combining to assist in the rise of the Independents to a position of Authority in England. Indeed these vigorous returned New Englanders knew how, on the other side of the Atlantic, a Commonwealth could be built up out of an aggrega-

tion of little spiritual democracies, free of any nation-wide ecclesiastical control. In this indirect way Massachusetts helped to strengthen the basis of Oliver Cromwell's power.

Had Cromwell succeeded in founding a Puritan dynasty in England, what would have happened to Massachusetts? Would the homeward flow of God-fearing colonists have proceeded with augmented volume, as it was felt that the cause of true Religion was effectually secured against its enemies in the mother country? We cannot say. This only is clear, that if the English Civil War had come ten years earlier, we should not to-day be gathered together to celebrate the Tercentenary of the Colony of Massachusetts. Nay, if Winthrop and his companions, who met together at Cambridge in August, 1629, to resolve upon transplanting their Charter to the New World, and there creating an independent

society, could have seen that a generation later the Puritan tide would gather such force as to sweep away Archbishop Laud and King Charles I, and place a Puritan at the head of the English State, would they not have possessed their souls in patience, and awaited the day of deliverance in their native land? The Future was closed to them; and in a swift access of impatience they took the irrevocable step, which made the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

If we would appreciate the spirit of this early Puritan Community, we should turn to the pages of the vast confused folio in which Cotton Mather, the apologist of the persecuting theocracy, recounts the ecclesiastical history of New England between 1620 and 1698. The 'Magnalia Christi Americana' is not a book which the historian can accept as a repository of exact facts or well-founded judgments, still less, despite occasional beauties of thought and phrase,

as a work of art; but here is the early history of New England as it reflects itself in the mind of a cultivated Puritan divine writing at the opening of the eighteenth century. Mather, though a firm believer in witchcraft, and many other superstitions long since discarded, was no ill-furnished or narrow-minded provincial, but a man versed in the works of Newton and Locke, and so far from being a secessionist that he dedicated his 'Life of Eliot' to a well-known English peer. In him the old Puritanism of the seventeenth century was blended with the newer type of rational curiosity, which flourished in the Royal Society. Yet for Mather, New England was a remarkable country 'devoted unto the existence of the Puritan Religion in its purest and highest reformation.' For him, 'the blessed old planters,' as he calls them, had founded a society entirely perfect, and therefore admitting of no deviation in type. In congre-

gationalism they had devised 'a sweet sort of temperament between rigid Presbyterianism and levelling Brownism,' and it was the duty of their successors to provide against any decline from that holy model. Massachusetts was a very godly state, its history largely contained in the lives of sixty famous divines, and in the educational work of Harvard College. In the past of this 'nation' Mather finds nothing to challenge, nothing to criticise, nothing to reprove. The true purpose of God was nowhere more perfectly embodied in human institutions and had nowhere been served by nobler human instruments. 'Our New England,' he writes, 'should boast and tell of her Winthrop, a lawgiver as patient as Lycurgus, but not admitting any of his criminal disorders, devout as Numa, but not liable to any of his heathenish madnesses, a governor in whom the excellence of religion made a most improving addition

unto the virtues wherein, even without these, he would have made a parallel for the great men of Greece or of Rome, which the pen of a Plutarch has eternised.' We may smile at such enthusiasm, for Winthrop acquiesced in persecutions which his better nature condemned, but there are worse forms of patriotic pride than one founded upon the conviction that the value of a state is only to be measured by the triumph of virtue and of faith.

In most matters pertaining to the conduct of public affairs the Commonwealth of Massachusetts reflected the spirit and teaching of the mother country. The law was the English Common Law. The justices of the peace were entrusted with the powers exercised by the justices in England. As Hutchinson, one of your old historians, has put it, 'the government of all the Colonies, like that of the colonies of old Rome, might be considered as an "*effigies parva*" of the

Mother State.' Equally with the Puritans of England, their fellow Nonconformists in Massachusetts looked upon Magna Carta and the Bill of Rights as the corner-stones of their liberty. They had learned, as Burke pointed out in one of the noblest of his speeches, that the great contests for freedom in England had been from the earliest times chiefly on the point of taxation, and it was here, upon this specific power of taxing, that their own love of liberty was specially fixed. It is, then, no paradox that the mainspring of the opposition to England in the War of Independence should have been the most English of the Colonies, guided by the exponents of the English Common Law. The same logic which led Hampden to resist Ship Money led Otis to declaim against the Stamp Tax. 'The spirit which resists your taxation in America,' said Chatham, 'is the same that fiercely opposed loans, benevolences, and Ship Money in England.' Many

distinguished Englishmen were aware of this, and saw in the American War of Independence a characteristically English act.

A generation of fair-minded historians on either side of the Atlantic enables us to view this old and famous controversy in a light unclouded by passion and prejudice. We can see that each party had a case capable of being presented in the high court of reason. The needs of colonial defence spoke for England, the tradition of constitutional liberty for America. It is perhaps a sufficient condemnation of the wisdom, as apart from the justice, of the policy of George III, that it was condemned by Chatham and Burke, that it was even debated in Parliament, whether regular officers in the army might decline to serve their sovereign against the colonists, that the Corporation of London and of several other towns drew up addresses approving the colonial cause, and that in the eyes of British

society no stigma at any time attached to the expression of pro-American views.

We are accustomed to think of the severance of the colonists from the mother country as inevitable, and, given the political cultivation of the two parties to the dispute, inevitable it was. Inventions in the sphere of politics are not like inventions in electrical science. It is only by a long process of trial and error, only after the human race has paid in blood and treasure for the mistakes which arise from human pride and human blindness, that eventually some happy formula, some reconciling compromise, which all the time was lying ready to hand, if there had been eyes to see it, leaps to light and solves the difficulty. So it was with the history of religious toleration: so it has been with the history of the British Empire. It was not until Europe had been laid waste by a century of religious warfare that the doctrine of religious toleration

found a place in the policies of statesmen. It was only after the American Colonies had been finally lost that Britain discovered in the principle of responsible government the secret of combining free peoples in a permanent political association. If British statesmanship in the reign of George III had been able to find the formula which now summarises and consecrates the relation between Britain and her Dominions, the breach with the American Colonies, had it come at all, would have been effected without strife or bitterness. Then, indeed, the Colonies could have quietly dropped off, in Turgot's phrase, 'like ripe fruit from the tree.' Yet it is not clear that, under the hypothesis which we are considering, a severance would have been necessary. It might have come over slavery, like the breach with the Cape Boers in 1833, or over the British policy in Quebec, or over Ireland, but again it might not have come

at all. Ties of sentiment 'light as air and strong as links of iron' might have held together in some loose form of association the races which use the English tongue and live the English law.

Dis aliter visum. The government of George III had no notion of a Commonwealth in which the Colonies should rank as free and equal members with the mother country. The idea of Dominion status, which is now a guiding principle of the British Empire, was as foreign to the mind of the British Parliament of those days as the quantum theory or the astronomy of the atom. We cannot blame them. Statesmen can only do business with the intellectual currency of their own age. So the fatal severance was made. America, led by Massachusetts and Virginia, went one way, Britain went another. A shining destiny awaited the gifted peoples thus unhappily sundered; on the American colonists was

devolved the task of building up on a vast continent the greatest democratic commonwealth known in human history; upon Britain the acquisition and the rule of an empire in every quarter of the globe, an empire slowly merging, by almost imperceptible stages, into a Commonwealth of Free States.

It is not unnatural to compare the historical rôle of your remarkable community with that which has been played by Scotland in the annals of the British Empire. Scotland, like Massachusetts, is a small country, which, in the middle of the seventeenth century, was dominated by a harsh and narrow form of Calvinism. In Scotland as in Massachusetts there was no tolerance for dissent. In each country there flourished abundantly that long train of hideous and unlovely vices which so often follows upon the theocratic state, hypocrisy, bigotry, and the fiercest cruelty masking as the

purest goodness. Yet what a school of civic virtue arose under the stern shadow of Predestination in each of these widely separated lands! What endurance, what heroism, what enthusiasm for great causes, what eager and genuine concern for the grave issues of human destiny! The New England Puritans, like the Cameronians of Scotland, acknowledged no debts to the Muses or the Graces, and in our gay and pleasure-loving age their sombre shovel-hatted figures would be received with a shudder of aversion. But if great nations are to come into being, it is out of such stern material that they must take their rise. In the first explosion of volcanic fires, the burning lava pours over the flowery slopes, and buries them beneath a pall of smoking blackness. Then, by degrees, the fires cool, the central source of ardour is extinguished, and the flowers and fruits of the field spring from the volcanic soil in

prodigal abundance. So it was in Scotland and in Massachusetts. As time proceeded, the primal fervours of Calvinism died away, and as they cooled, or were finally extinguished, the flowers of a new humanism sprang up in the rich and generous soil.

The passage of Massachusetts from the old narrow Puritanism of the Puritan Fathers to the wide and tolerant liberalism which now prevails affords an interesting chapter of American history. The old spirit was contained in some lines written by Digby, one of your early Governors, and found in his pocket at his death,

> 'Let men of God in Court and Chamber watch
> O'er such as do a toleration hatch.'

Little by little, however, the stern bastions crumbled before the spirit of a freer age. The acceptance in 1662 of 'the halfway covenant' by seventy ministers of religion belonging to Massachusetts was the first breach. The foundation of the Brattle

Street Church, and the repeal of the laws against the Catholics in 1691, was a second. From that point onwards the advance of a milder and more secular spirit was noticeable. Towards the end of the eighteenth century the principle of toleration was generally accepted, though public office was still confined to members of the Protestant religion. The Constitution of 1870 declares that it is 'the right as well as the duty of all men in society to worship the supreme Being in the manner and season most agreable to their conscience.'

If Virginia, an old settlement of English royalists, may claim the honour of having furnished the civil and military leaders in the War of Independence, the man soonest and most clearly to foresee the future greatness of the American Republic came from Massachusetts. His name was John Adams. In a letter written October 12, 1755, Adams discloses a wide forward-reaching vision of

destiny, which sets him above James Otis and other eloquent traffickers in constitutional precedents. 'Soon after the reformation,' he writes, 'a few people came into this New World for conscience sake. Perhaps this apparently trivial incident may transfer the great seat of Empire to America. It looks likely to me; for if we can remove the turbulent Gallicks, our people, according to the exactest computations, will, in another century, become more numerous than England herself. Should this be the case, since we have, I may say, all the naval stores of the nation in our hands, it will be easy to obtain mastery of the seas, and then the United force of all Europe will not be able to subdue us.' So early did Adams entertain the prospect of a powerful American Republic loose from Europe and counterbalancing the weight of the European continent. Adams was neither the perfect saint nor the perfect sage. In propaganda he was violent rather

than scrupulous. As a publicist he enslaved himself to many untenable doctrines such as 'where annual elections end, there slavery begins,' but he had two rare political gifts. He thought about great things in a great way, and he was resolute in the pursuit of objects clearly envisaged and sharply defined. In the bottom of his heart he stood for an independent American Commonwealth from the first and all the time. His irreconcilable temper, served by wide knowledge and all the resources of a ruminating mind, made him a leader of his people. His spirit rose above constitutional minutiæ to the real greatness of the occasion, to the incomparable offerings of fate. 'When,' he asked, 'before the present epoch had three millions of people full power and a fair opportunity to form and establish the wisest and happiest government that human wisdom can contrive?' The best mind of Massachusetts, at this, the greatest hour in her

history, is to be found in the writings of this rigorous, uncompromising, far-sighted man.

To all lovers of international concord the manner of parting, embittering, as it did, for so many generations the feeling entertained in the United States for the government and people of Britain, must necessarily give rise to infinite regrets; not so the fact that a parting was effected. The severance, though dearly bought, was good for England and good for America. The liberties of two peoples were involved in the struggle. Had George III beaten down the American colonists, he would, by the same act, have retarded the constitutional growth of England. The liberation of the American Colonies rendered the establishment of despotism impossible in Britain, and made possible the creation for the first time in history of a democratic republic upon a vast scale. The mere fact that such a state should have been founded in the New World sent a thrill of

hope through the peoples of Europe. The lineaments of the new society in the West were seen through the flattering glaze of idealism. To the poets and dreamers of Europe, America appeared to be a country relieved from all the unhappy legacies of the Old World, without armies or navies, without pauperism or a national debt, a land eternally consecrate to peace, simplicity, and virtue. In history illusions are often more fruitful than truths. The down-trodden members of an old society refreshed their courage and renewed their faith at the distant and dazzling prospect of the happy life nurtured and protected by the perfect state.

'Darkness has dawned in the East
On the noon of time:
The death birds descend to their feast
From the hungry clime.

'Let Freedom and Peace flee far
To a sunnier strand
And follow Love's folding star
To the Evening land.'

Thus Shelley, in the age of dark reaction which preceded the wars of the Revolution and the Empire in Europe, the age in which the New World was invoked by Canning to redress the balance of the Old. Nor was it until the Civil War between North and South that Europe began sadly to realise that the fiercer passions and baser appetites of man might be discovered in the democracy of the West as they continued to flourish in those older communities from which the American people were descended.

We are a long way removed from the Bay Psalm Book, the earliest production of the Massachusetts Press. Dynasty after dynasty has ruled in this Commonwealth. Influence lay first with the divines, then with the lawyers, then with the men of business, afterwards with the politicians, and when all four types of human excellence had made themselves manifest on the public stage, a time came when the Muses spoke and the

sceptre passed to the masters of the pen. On this occasion, and in this place, we cannot ignore the liberating influence, which more particularly in the later half of the nineteenth century was exercised by the teachers and writers of New England, how Emerson's vivid electric prose cast its spell over the heart and mind of generous youth on both sides of the Atlantic, with what entrancement two generations of English readers surrendered themselves to the delicate imagination of Hawthorne; how three gifted men, Ticknor, Longfellow, James Russell Lowell, holding in succession the Smith Chair of Literature in Harvard University, made America aware of its heritage in European literature, and Europe conscious of the precious gifts which the New World might contribute to the common stock of humane letters. In the history of literature there have been many epochs, which, if they are to be judged by the permanent quality of indi-

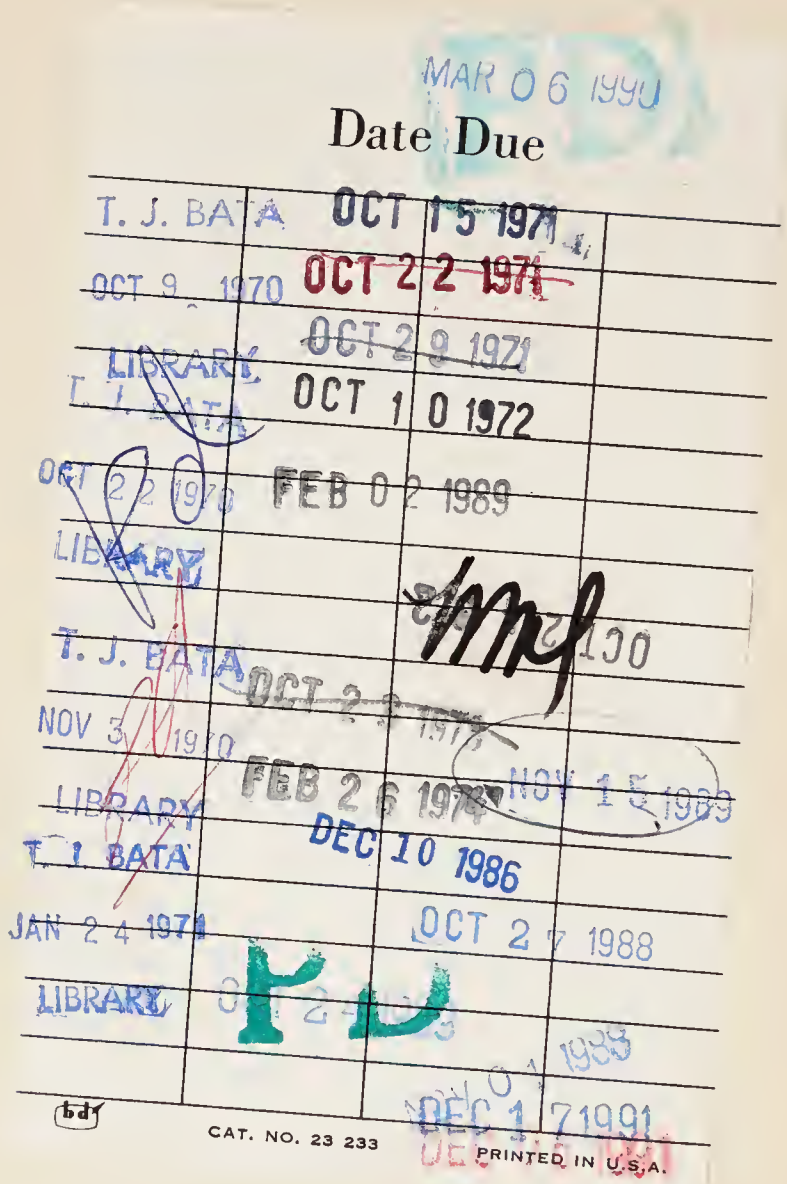
vidual masterpieces, will rank before this movement of the lettered spirit in New England, but none which have more widely or swiftly affected the standard of culture in a great population.

The salt which blows from the sea into the nostrils of every Englishman mingles with the eastern breeze in Massachusetts. The men of this State have stood in the forefront of American maritime enterprise and discovery. They have traded with the West Indies for sugar, with the East Indies for pepper, they have gone whaling in the Arctic seas, and spent many a month among the cold fogs of Newfoundland with their fishing-nets. Repelled by the stony soil of the interior, they have drawn the better part of their livelihood from the sea. 'To the extraordinary commercial growth of New York,' writes Mr. Morison in his 'Maritime History of Massachusetts,' 'The Bay State was a leading contributor. Many of the famous

New York shipbuilders and merchants were Massachusetts men.' 'It is well known,' writes a Manhattan expert in 1844, 'that one third of the commerce of New York from 1837 to 1842 was carried either upon Massachusetts account or on Massachusetts vessels.' To the classics of the sea you have contributed 'Two Years Before the Mast' and 'Moby Dick.'

And now you are celebrating your Tercentenary and I stand here before you, if not the very kind of Englishman whom the founders of this Colony crossed the Atlantic Ocean to avoid, at least one a good deal too tolerant for their taste, while you who listen to me would perhaps be no less distant from the temper and outlook of those stern servants of the Lord. Little did the Founders reckon that a time would come when the New Canaan would be largely occupied by men of the Irish race, whom they held in deep contempt, or of the Roman Faith, which

they regarded with acute abhorrence. Little did they foresee that in the fullness of years their New England would be followed by a New Ireland, a New Italy, a New Germany, a New Poland, and a New Greece all destined to be merged in a great and harmonious American commonwealth. Yet am I altogether mistaken in thinking that with milder manners, a broader outlook, a more tolerant philosophy, you retain, despite all the transformations of time, the moral traces of your origin, an energy and simplicity of character, a sense of duty, an acknowledgement of the mysterious and compelling power of the spirit in man. If I am justified in this surmise, then these high qualities will be fortified by the contemplation of the hardy English emigrants, who, living in times far removed from our present wealth and luxury, fashioned your original Commonwealth by their enterprise, their labour, their courage, and their faith, and to-day are held in honourable commemoration by English-speaking men and women throughout the world.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